

THE BIG IDEAS

Daring Greatly

What is it?

Wholehearted Living

Is where it's at.

Vulnerability Hangovers

Have any lately?

Vulnerability Myths

Time for some debunking.

#1 Myth

Vulnerability = weakness. (Not true!)

Paradox of Vulnerability

I value yours. I'm scared of mine.

Vulnerability Prayer

Is powerful.

People in the Stands

You are not a jackass whisperer. :)

Values

Aspirational vs. Practiced

Hope Is Learned!

The three keys.

Daring Greatly

How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead

BY BRENÉ BROWN · GOTHAM BOOKS © 2012 · 287 PAGES

"The phrase *Daring Greatly* is from Theodore Roosevelt's speech "Citizenship in a Republic." The speech, sometimes referred to as "The Man in the Arena," was delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, on April 23, 1910. This is the passage that made the speech famous:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again,

because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause;

who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly..."

The first time I read this quote, I thought, *This is vulnerability. Everything I've learned from over a decade of research on vulnerability has taught me this exact lesson. Vulnerability is not knowing victory or defeat, it's understanding the necessity of both; it's engaging. It's being all in.*"

~ Brené Brown from *Daring Greatly*

Brené Brown is phenomenal.

Have you watched her TED talks yet? If not, get on that.

Here's her first one: [Listening to shame](#). And the second: [The Power of Vulnerability](#).

Brené is one of the world's leading researchers on shame and vulnerability and this book is a powerful manifesto on the importance of being willing to embrace our vulnerability and, as the title suggests, dare greatly.

She's a funny, down-to-earth and brilliant writer. It's the kinda book that deliberately makes you feel (more than) a little uncomfortable (especially if you're a recovering perfectionist like me! :o) as we don't tend to shine a lot of light on the less than pleasant stuff in our lives and psyche. But that discomfort is worth it as we, to use her words, take off our masks, drop our armor and learn to be vulnerable while daring greatly more consistently.

If you'd like to embrace your vulnerability and live with more courage, compassion and connection, I think you'll love the book. Get it here and check out Brené's site for more goodness: brenebrown.com.

"What we know matters, but who we are matters more. Being rather than knowing requires showing up and letting ourselves be seen. It requires us to dare greatly, to be vulnerable."

~ Brené Brown

For now, let's jump in with a quick look at a handful of my favorite Big Ideas!

"Sharing something that you've created is a vulnerable but essential part of engaged and Wholehearted living. It's the epitome of daring greatly."

~ Brené Brown

WHAT IS DARING GREATLY?

*"Perfect and bulletproof are seductive, but they don't exist in the human experience. We must walk into the arena, whatever it may be—a new relationship, an important meeting, our creative process, or a difficult family conversation—with courage and a willingness to engage. Rather than sitting on the sidelines and hurling judgment and advice, **we must dare to show up and let ourselves be seen.** This is vulnerability. This is *daring greatly.*"*

What does it mean to dare greatly?

We must dare to show up and let ourselves be seen.

Not when we're perfect and have it *all* figured out. That time will never come.

NOW.

Embracing our imperfection.

Being willing to be vulnerable and take the next step without any guarantees.

This doesn't need to be about some big ol' world-changing, huge project. The best opportunities are often the most mundane. Can we take the next baby step in our new relationship, in our workplace, with our family?

Moment by moment we have opportunities to dare greatly. Let's!!

WHOLEHEARTED LIVING

"I am not what has happened to me. I am what I choose to become."

~ Carl Jung

*"Wholehearted living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, **No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough.** It's going to bed at night thinking, **Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.**"*

Wholehearted living.

It's the focus of another one of Brené's books called [*The Gifts of Imperfection*](#)—which is currently en route. Note coming soon. :)

Wholehearted living starts with embracing our worthiness.

We are enough NOW.

Not when we've achieved x, y and z.

Right now.

Living from that place of wholeness allows us to more fully embrace our vulnerability and explore our edges with a confidence and courage grounded in a sense of enoughness. That's a challenging thing to do in a society that's constantly (!) screaming at us that we're *not* enough.

Brené describes that as a culture of scarcity + "never enough." The book is all about countering that as we cultivate more courage, compassion and connection.

VULNERABILITY HANGOVERS

*"The morning after the talk, I woke up with one of the worst vulnerability hangovers of my life. You know that feeling when you wake up and everything feels fine until the memory of laying yourself open washes over you and you want to hide under the covers? **What did I do? Five hundred people officially think I'm crazy and it totally sucks. I forgot to mention two important***

"There's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

~ Leonard Cohen

"I define vulnerability as uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure."

~ Brené Brown

things. Did I actually have a slide with the word breakdown on it to reinforce the story I shouldn't have told in the first place? I must leave town."

That's hilarious.

I remember laughing out loud the first time I read that.

"Vulnerability hangover." Shaking my head as I reminisce on the number of times I've woken up with one of *those*.

*"Did I *really* just say/do that?"* Hahah.

How about *you*? Ever experience that? Good to know we're not alone, eh? :)

I love the concept of a vulnerability hangover AND I love the fact that Brené so powerfully embodies the very wisdom she's sharing.

Headline: *"Leading shame researcher freaks herself out being vulnerable."*

Laughing. So awesome. It's why we all love her so much. She's REAL. Demonstrating the courage, compassion and connection at the heart of her work that we all aspire to have more of.

(The best part is that she thought 500+ people would see the talk and think she's crazy. Of course, the talk went viral and millions of people got the chance to see someone daring greatly!)

DEBUNKING VULNERABILITY MYTHS

"Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences."

~ Brené Brown

"Yes, we are totally exposed when we are vulnerable. Yes, we are in the torture chamber that we call uncertainty. And, yes, we're taking a huge emotional risk when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable. But there's no equation where taking risks, braving uncertainty, and opening ourselves up to emotional exposure equals weakness."

Vulnerability.

Even typing the word elicits a certain vulnerability. :)

Brené spends the second chapter debunking a number of vulnerability myths.

The #1 myth?

That vulnerability is a weakness.

VULNERABILITY IS *NOT* A WEAKNESS

"Shame resilience is key to embracing our vulnerability. We can't let ourselves be seen if we're terrified by what people might think. Often 'not being good at vulnerability' means that we're damn good at shame."

~ Brené Brown

"MYTH 1: 'VULNERABILITY IS A WEAKNESS'"

The perception that vulnerability is a weakness is the most widely accepted myth about vulnerability and the most dangerous."

Vulnerability is, unequivocally, **not** a weakness.

Why not?

Well, as Brené advises: "Vulnerability is the core of all emotions and feelings. To feel is to be vulnerable. To believe vulnerability is weakness is to believe that feeling is weakness. To foreclose on our emotional life out of a fear that the costs will be too high is to walk away from the very thing that gives purpose and meaning to living."

THE PARADOX OF VULNERABILITY

"During my talk I asked the audience two questions that reveal so much about the many paradoxes that define vulnerability. First, I asked, 'How many of you struggle to be vulnerable because you think of vulnerability as weakness?' Hands shot up across the room. Then I asked,

"Vulnerability is the last thing I want you to see in me, but the first thing I look for in you."

~ Brené Brown

"When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them."

~ Martin Buber

"Daring greatly means finding our own path and respecting what that search looks like for other folks."

~ Brené Brown

"When you watched people on this stage being vulnerable, how many of you thought it was courageous?" Again, hands shot up across the room.

We love seeing raw truth and openness in other people, but we're afraid to let them see it in us...

Here's the crux of the struggle:

I want to experience your vulnerability but I don't want to be vulnerable.

Vulnerability is courage in you and inadequacy in me.

I'm drawn to your vulnerability but repelled by mine."

First, here's a link to the TED talk Brené is referring to. It's called [The Power of Vulnerability](#).

And... Behold!

The Paradox of Vulnerability.

We are inspired by and drawn to someone else's vulnerability. It's a sign of courage and strength in them. But we are repelled by our own vulnerability. It's a sign of our weakness. D'oh. :)

Here's to embracing our own vulnerability and giving ourselves a chance to be seen!

THE VULNERABILITY PRAYER

"I took a deep breath and recited my vulnerability prayer as I waited my turn: *Give me the courage to show up and let myself be seen*. Then, seconds before I was introduced, I thought about a paperweight on my desk that reads, "What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?" I pushed that question out of my head to make room for a new question. As I walked up to the stage, I literally whispered aloud, "What's worth doing even if I fail?"

Wow.

Everything about that is awesome.

First, Brené's vulnerability prayer: "*Give me the courage to show up and let myself be seen*." <— Amen.

Second, how about this for a paperweight on our desks? —> "*What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?*"

Powerful question... And perhaps the most powerful question: "*What's worth doing even if I fail?*"

How about *you*?

What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?

...

And, what's worth doing even if you did fail?

...

May we reflect on those questions and live their answers wholeheartedly as we have the courage to show up and let ourselves be seen. Amen.

P.S. "... vulnerability is life's great dare. It's life asking, "Are you all in? Can you value your own vulnerability as much as you value it in others?" Answering yes to these questions is not weakness: It's courage beyond measure. It's daring greatly. And often the result of daring greatly isn't a victory march as much as it is a quiet sense of freedom mixed with a little battle fatigue."

"When we feel good about the choices we're making and when we're engaging with the world from a place of worthiness rather than scarcity, we feel no need to judge and attack."

~ Brené Brown

WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THE STANDS?

"Going back to Roosevelt's "Man in the Arena" speech, I also learned that the people who love me, the people I really depend on, were never the critics who were pointing at me while I stumbled. They weren't in the bleachers at all. They were with me in the arena. Fighting for me and with me.

Nothing has transformed my life more than realizing that it's a waste of time to evaluate my worthiness by weighing the reaction of the people in the stands. The people who love me and will be there regardless of the outcome are within arm's reach. This realization has changed everything."

Love that.

Two things:

1. The people who love us will be there regardless of how we fare in the arena. (Very important!)
2. The people not living their own hero's journey/daring greatly in their own arenas will be our most vocal critics. There's basically an inverse relationship between the vitriol of someone's criticism and their own engagement in the arena. Meaning, the less a person is daring greatly, the more they're prone to criticize those who are. Those who are all in get just how hard it is to step into the arena and offer compassion rather than criticism.

(btw: Notice this goes both ways. When WE are most engaged in our lives, we criticize a *lot* less than we're not. So, if you're all snippity snip sauce, check in and see how YOU are not rockin' it rather than find all the things someone else is doing wrong!)

As Brené advises, we need to untie our sense of worthiness from the opinions of those in the bleachers. Period.

She then quotes her friend, Scott Stratten, who wrote *UnMarketing*. His immortal words capture it perfectly: "Don't try to win over the haters; you're not the jackass whisperer." <-- Hilarious. :)

Ideally, we can stand wholeheartedly in our worthiness, appreciate our loved ones in the arena who have our backs, and have compassion for those who are struggling with their own vulnerability and using us as a pinata for their own pain. (Easier said than done, of course!)

ASPIRATIONAL VS. PRACTICED VALUES

"We can't give people what we don't have. Who we are matters immeasurably more than what we know or who we want to be.

The space between our practiced values (what we're actually doing, thinking, and feeling) and our aspirational values (what we want to do, think, and feel) is the value gap, or what I call "the disengagement divide."

Aspirational values vs. practiced values.

I remember reading Dan Harris's book, *10% Happier* (which, btw, is a brilliant (and funny) look at one guy's path to optimization via being vulnerable and daring greatly), and laughing at his response to his wife challenging him on whether he was living some of the values he was espousing.

He said: "Those are currently aspirational values not operational ones." Hah! So good.

How about *you*? Where do your practical/embodyed values not quite match up to your aspirational values?

How can you wholeheartedly (with self-compassion and courage! :), close that disengagement gap a bit more today?!

"In terms of teaching our children to dare greatly... the question isn't so much 'Are you parenting the right way?' as it is: 'Are you the adult that you want your child to grow up to be?'"

~ Brené Brown

"without question, putting ourselves out there means there's a far greater risk of feeling hurt. But as I look back on my own life and what Daring Greatly has meant to me, I can honestly say that nothing is as uncomfortable, dangerous, and hurtful as believing that I'm standing on the outside of my life looking in and wondering what it would be like if I had the courage to show up and let myself be seen."

~ Brené Brown

HOPE IS LEARNED!

"Experience with adversity, tenacity, and grit emerged in my research as an important quality for Wholeheartedness..."

According to Snyder, who dedicated his career to studying this topic, hope isn't an emotion; it's a way of thinking or a cognitive process. Emotions play a supporting role, but hope is really a thought process made up of what Snyder calls a trilogy of goals, pathways, and agency. In very simple terms, hope happens when:

- We have the ability to set realistic goals (*I know where I want to go*).
- We are able to figure out how to achieve those goals, including the ability to stay flexible and develop alternate routes (*I know how to get there, I'm persistent, and I can tolerate disappointment and try again*).
- We believe in ourselves. (*I can do this!*).

So, hope is the combination of setting goals, having the tenacity and perseverance to pursue them, and believing in our own abilities. Hope is *Plan B*."

Hope = Goals + pathways + agency.

Remember: It's learned. And, it's only learned through adversity and challenges. Brené shares this in a great chapter on parenting and how we need to allow our kids to struggle as they cultivate a belief in themselves and a HOPE that empowers them to dare greatly.

... Well, that's a *super* quick look at an amazing book. I hope you dug it and I hope you love the full thing and all of Brené's work. May we each cultivate our hope, wholeheartedness, courage, compassion and connection as we step into the arena of our lives and dare greatly!

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About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.

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